

Why is HIV testing important?

- Individuals tested and treated earlier in their infection tend to have better health and quality of life than those testing later in their disease.
- HIV often goes unrecognized. About 25% of people with HIV in Maine don't know they are infected because they haven't been tested. For adolescents with HIV, it's estimated about 50% don't know.
- About 40% of people with HIV in Maine are diagnosed in the late stages of their disease.
- More than half of new HIV infections are caused by people who are infected but untested and unaware of their infection.



For More Information:

Maine HIV Program

207-287-3747

www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ddc/hiv_std_vh.htm

National Center for Disease Control Hotline

1-800-232-4636

Information about HIV testing, prevention and care services:

ACAP, Presque Isle 768-3056

Bangor STD Clinic 947-0700

Down East AIDS Network, Ellsworth 667-3506

Eastern Maine AIDS Network, Bangor 990-3626

Frannie Peabody Center, Portland 749-6818

Health 2000, Portland 828-2001

The Horizon Program, Augusta 621-6201

Just Guys, Augusta 621-3794

Lewiston STD Clinic 795-4019

Merrymeeting AIDS Support Services,
Brunswick 874-8446

Portland STD Clinic 874-8446

St. Mary's Regional Medical Center,
Lewiston 777-8507

Wabanaki Health Services, Bangor 990-0605

HIV Testing

Patient Information

HIV testing is now a recommended part of routine health care. Your healthcare provider may talk with you today about HIV testing.



For info about living with HIV in Maine:

www.positiveme.org

About HIV testing:

The HIV test is voluntary. Voluntary means that you choose whether or not to test. There are no penalties for either choice. You also have the right to ask any questions about HIV and the HIV test before you choose. HIV testing is also available in settings other than those that provide health care (see page 5 for locations).

What is HIV?

HIV is a virus that infects people's bodies and attacks the cells that help fight infection and disease. HIV causes AIDS, a life-threatening disease. HIV lives in blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk. HIV can be passed from person to person through unprotected sex or sharing needles/works and from an HIV infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding.

What is the HIV test?

There are many different tests for HIV available. The HIV tests look for HIV antibodies in your body. Antibodies are made by a person's body when it's infected by a virus. If the test finds antibodies, it means you have HIV. Like most medical tests, an HIV test is not perfect and you are not 100% guaranteed that the test results are right. Talk with your health care provider about testing options and what would be best for you.

Why should I be tested for HIV?

Knowing if you are infected with HIV is important health information. If you are not infected with HIV (negative), you can take steps to make sure you stay that way. If you are infected with HIV (positive), you can get treatment and other help to stay healthy. You also can prevent passing HIV to others.

What are the risks of testing?

You might feel fear and anxiety while waiting for the test result, concern about confidentiality and fear of discrimination. If confidentiality is a major concern, there are anonymous HIV test sites throughout the state. You can have an HIV test at one of these sites without giving your name or any identifying information about yourself. Most of the agencies listed on page 5 offer anonymous HIV testing. Just ask if your test can be done anonymously when you call to make an appointment.

What do the test results mean?

Test results depend on timing or when the last time was that you might have been exposed to HIV. When HIV first gets in a person's body (exposure), it can take up to 3 months for antibodies to show up on a test. So in the first 3 months after you are exposed to HIV, the test might not show it. During that time, HIV can be in your body and it can be passed to other people. Talk to your health care provider if you aren't sure about exposures.

Negative HIV test result

A negative HIV test result indicates that HIV antibodies were not found in your body at the time the test was done. You can only trust a negative result when you are sure that you have had no possible HIV exposure in the 3 months before you test. Your negative HIV test result may be reported to you in person, over the phone or in a letter.

Positive HIV test result

A positive HIV test result indicates that HIV antibodies were found in your body and you are infected with HIV. You may feel and look healthy when you're infected with HIV. Your positive HIV test result may be reported to you in person or over the phone. If you test HIV positive:

- And you are pregnant, there is medicine to help you prevent passing HIV to your baby
- Someone will talk to you about getting medical care and other kinds of help you need right away
- Someone will also talk to you about who you've had sex with, been married to and/or shared needles with. It's important to tell people that they may have come in contact with HIV
- You can learn how to prevent giving HIV to others.